



## GUEST OPINION ARTICLE

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*This guest opinion is by State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.*

*Length: Approximately 320 words*

### **Surviving Cancer Often Brings New Challenges** **by State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.**

Chances are, someone you care about is a cancer survivor. In fact, three out of four American families will have at least one family member diagnosed with cancer. In North Dakota, about 22,000 of our friends, neighbors and family members are cancer survivors.

As a result of continuing medical improvements, more people are surviving cancer. But surviving cancer often means encountering issues with follow-up care, quality of life and long-term survivorship.

A cancer “survivor” is anyone living with a history of cancer – from the moment of diagnosis through the remainder of life. Each hour, each day from that moment, time as a cancer survivor increases.

Major advances in cancer prevention, early detection and treatment have all resulted in longer survival. Surviving cancer, however, can result in a host of other challenges. Physical, emotional and financial hardships often persist long after diagnosis and treatment. Survivors may face issues of pain management, long-term side effects of treatment, profound fear of recurrence, concern about job security and insurability, and decisions about end-of-life care.

In North Dakota, a dedicated group of key stakeholders and interested individuals – including cancer survivors, health-care professionals, public health workers, educators and volunteers – are drafting a plan for comprehensive cancer prevention and control. The North Dakota Cancer

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Coalition used state-specific cancer data to develop the goals, objectives and strategies detailed in the plan. The North Dakota State Cancer Plan addresses cancer prevention, screening and early detection, treatment, clinical trials, pain management, survivorship, end-of-life care, workforce of the future, and health-care disparities.

The North Dakota State Cancer Plan will be presented at the North Dakota Cancer Summit in Bismarck July 27, 2006. Learn more about the North Dakota Cancer Coalition, comprehensive cancer control and the state plan at [www.ndhealth.gov/compcancer/](http://www.ndhealth.gov/compcancer/).

It is our hope that fewer people are diagnosed with and more people survive cancer. June 4, 2006, is National Cancer Survivors Day. I urge you to honor the cancer survivors in your life. They are truly heroes.

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